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RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHEK #1074 2681002
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 251002Z SEP 09
FM AMEMBASSY BISHKEK
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2694
INFO RHMFIUU/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC

UNCLAS BISHKEK 001074

SIPDIS
SENSITIVE

STATE FOR SCA/CEN

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KG](#)
SUBJECT: KYRGYZSTAN: EMBASSY BISHKEK CONCURS WITH 1206
PROPOSAL

¶1. (SBU) Embassy strongly endorses the 1206 proposal submitted by the Office of Military Cooperation (OMC) Bishkek to U.S. Central Command on September 23. The proposal to train and equip the Batken Infantry Battalion for deployment to Afghanistan, and to refurbish Kyrgyzstan's cargo aircraft to fly missions in support of the coalition in Afghanistan will support U.S. policy objectives in Kyrgyzstan as well as in Central and South Asia. The proposal will also significantly improve U.S.-Kyrgyz relations and help to create the conditions necessary for continued use of Manas Transit Center and ground routes in support of the Northern Distribution Network. Embassy recommends that General Petraeus present this approved proposal as a deliverable to the Kyrgyz leadership during his next visit.

¶2. (SBU) The Government of Kyrgyzstan (GOKG) is interested in elevating its relationship with the U.S. and in contributing more to regional and international security. Kyrgyz officials have expressed to senior USG officials their willingness and intent to deploy forces to stability operations, including in Afghanistan. The GOKG created a new unit, the Batken Battalion, specifically for this purpose, and has invested significant national funds in developing infrastructure for this unit. In addition, the GOKG has stated that it would use its own cargo aircraft to deploy and support the Batken Battalion (and other coalition units), if those aircraft were brought up to international standards.

¶3. (SBU) Participation of Kyrgyzstan, a moderate, secular Muslim country in Operation Enduring Freedom may have political benefits as well, both in Kyrgyzstan and in other countries. Kyrgyz credibility in such a deployment is bolstered by the fact that Kyrgyzstan does not border Afghanistan nor are their significant numbers of Kyrgyz in Afghanistan. As a result, there should be no suspicion that the Kyrgyz might meddle in that country's internal affairs. Flying Kyrgyz cargo planes from the Manas Transit Center also gives Kyrgyzstan a greater stake in maintaining the U.S. Transit Center on its soil. Giving Kyrgyzstan the capability to participate in U.S. operations would increase U.S. influence here, promote greater cooperation between the two nations' militaries, and accelerate the modernization and westernization of Kyrgyz armed forces. The Kyrgyz Republic is the only Central Asian state which allows U.S. forces to base operations on its territory, and is also a key part of the Northern Distribution Network. Maintaining positive relations with Kyrgyzstan and supporting the continued operation of the U.S. Transit Center are key U.S. foreign policy goals.

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